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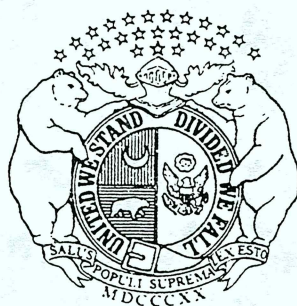
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1996 ANNUAL REPORT

STATE REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND



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MISSOURI REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

MISSOURI

State Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Blind

619 East Capitol Avenue, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101
(573) 751-4989 FAX(573) 751-4984

December 20, 1996

Governor Mel Carnahan
Missouri State Capitol Building
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Dear Governor Carnahan:

Enclosed you will find the 1996 annual report produced by the Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Blind. In this, our fourth year of operation, we have continued to provide Rehabilitation Services for the Blind with information, analysis, and ideas for the improvement of services to persons who are blind or visually impaired. Our review of agency policies, procedures and operations has given consumers an important source of input on the rehabilitation process for Missourians who are blind.

We hope that you find this report both informative and readable. We stand prepared to answer any questions about this report, the operations of Rehabilitation Services for the Blind or the work of the Rehabilitation Advisory Council.

Sincerely,



Kent Kolaga
Chairman
Rehabilitation Advisory
Council for the Blind

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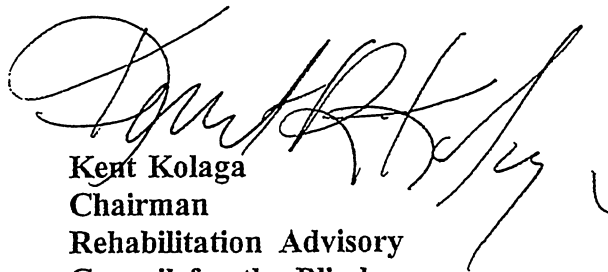
Fred Schroeder, Commissioner
United States Department of Education
Office of Special Education and
Rehabilitation Services
Rehabilitation Services Administration
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

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STATE REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

CHAIRMAN - KENT KOLAGA

VICE-CHAIRMAN - KEN EMMONS

SECRETARY-TREASURER - PATRICIA MORROW

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**STAFF MEMBERS - RITA LYNCH
MIKE MERRICK**

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SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Blind (SRAC), created by Executive Order 93-01 on February 5, 1993, is responsible for reviewing, analyzing, and advising Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB), a section of the Missouri Division of Family Services (DFS), on its provision of vocational rehabilitation services to Missourians who are blind or visually impaired.

During the period of this report, the SRAC worked cooperatively in many areas of interest with RSB to improve the range, scope, and quality of vocational rehabilitation services available in Missouri. Some of the areas worthy of note in this regard include changes in RSB's delivery of services for children. Acting upon recommendations from the SRAC's Children's Education Committee, RSB has begun efforts to reorient the focus of the children's program from one of direct service provision to one of advocacy, parent education, and resource location. It is hoped that this will have a greater impact on the long-term prospects of children in the education system, while eliminating duplication of efforts with other agencies and eliminating confusion and conflict.

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of consumers who complete their rehabilitation plan by achieving employment. During the period of this report, 298 Missourians achieved their vocational goal. Of these, 196 were placed in competitive employment, seven work in sheltered placements, sixteen became self-employed, and nine went to work through the support of the Business Enterprise Program. An additional 159 consumers chose to become homemakers, and one opted to work for no pay in a family business. These figures represent an increase of 48.4% compared to FY 1995, and 66.2% compared to FY 1994. In the area of competitive employment, RSB recorded 106 closures, as compared to 76 in FY 1995 and 57 in FY 1994, resulting in increases of 39.4% and 85.9% respectively.

Another advance that has taken place is the creation of a consumer mentoring program. RSB, the Missouri Council of the Blind, and the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri have joined efforts to develop a mentoring program. Mentors are intended to provide consumers with information relative to their adjustment to blindness, act as a role model, or to make themselves available to answer questions and provide moral support to the consumer. Due to the low incidence of blindness in the general population, this type of contact is viewed as a significant advantage to the consumer and promises to help project a more positive, successful image of persons who are blind to RSB's consumers. 55 persons have volunteered to act as mentors and RSB has received 128 requests from consumers for a mentor to be assigned.

The implementation of the Rehabilitation Assistant (RA) position in RSB's district offices has enhanced the performance of RSB field staff by removing the majority of the administrative burden from counselors and rehabilitation teachers. In July, 1996, a survey was initiated to measure the effectiveness of the RA position within the first year of implementation and to provide some measurement of their effect on vocational rehabilitation. Some of the quantifiable effects evidenced by the survey include: an increase in the amount of time field staff can devote to consumer-related matters of 15-20 percent, a more consumer-responsive office environment, and a more efficient administrative system.

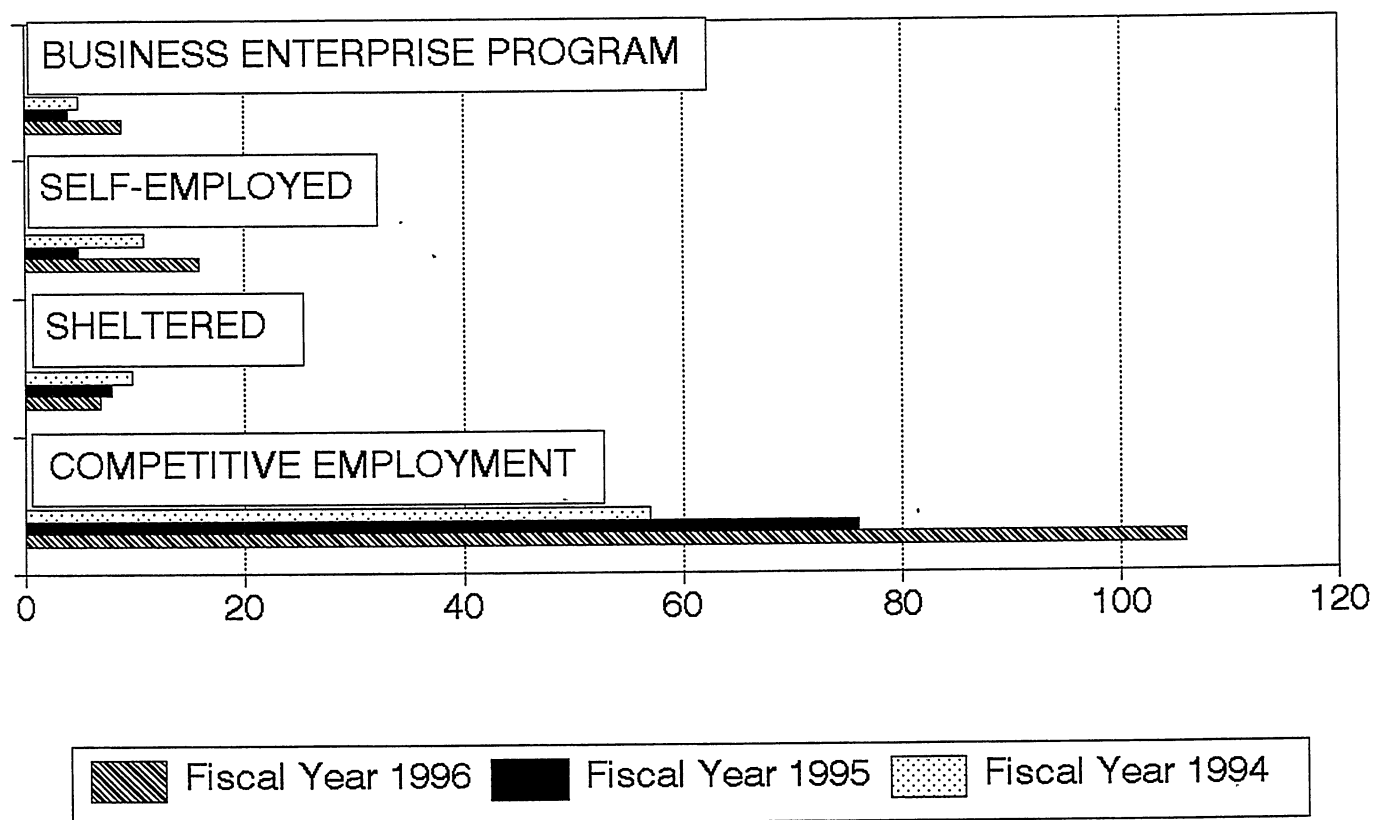
Two issues became matters for concern for the SRAC during the period of this report. The first of these relates to a fiscal concern. RSB's budget has been strained during the past fiscal year due in large part to expenditures that were greater than expected for readers and drivers, coupled with a reduction of core FTEs. Readers and drivers are part-time employees who are hired as an accommodation for RSB's field staff who are blind or visually impaired. Over the past three years, RSB has experienced an increase of 37.6% in the number of staff who are blind. At the same time, the wage rate for part-time employees has increased by 36.5%. RSB has submitted a new decision item to provide additional FTEs for reader and driver services, and remains committed to a policy of "leading by example" by hiring qualified staff who are blind or visually impaired.

The final issue of concern to the SRAC is the slow pace of appointments to membership on the SRAC. Since the appointment of members to the original SRAC in 1993, there have been only seven appointments; six of the original members have been reappointed, and one new appointment was made to replace a member who had resigned. Although Governor Carnahan has authorized those members whose terms have expired to continue until replaced, the lack of appointments has led to a diminishing number of SRAC members due to several resignations. This is particularly troublesome in maintaining the representation called for in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1992. The SRAC is hopeful that new appointments will be forthcoming early in FY 1997, both to meet the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act and to create a SRAC that is truly representative of the population RSB serves.

In this, their fourth year of operation, the SRAC has moved toward a more cooperative relationship with RSB. In reviewing the accomplishments of this year, it is noteworthy that many of the joint activities of the SRAC and RSB have come to fruition. A significant increase in employment, new efforts to support the staff who provide services to persons who are blind or visually impaired, and a renewed dedication to the purpose of achieving employment and personal independence mark this as a very successful year. The continuation of this momentum into the next year promises even greater opportunities for Missourians who are blind or visually impaired to achieve personal and vocational success.

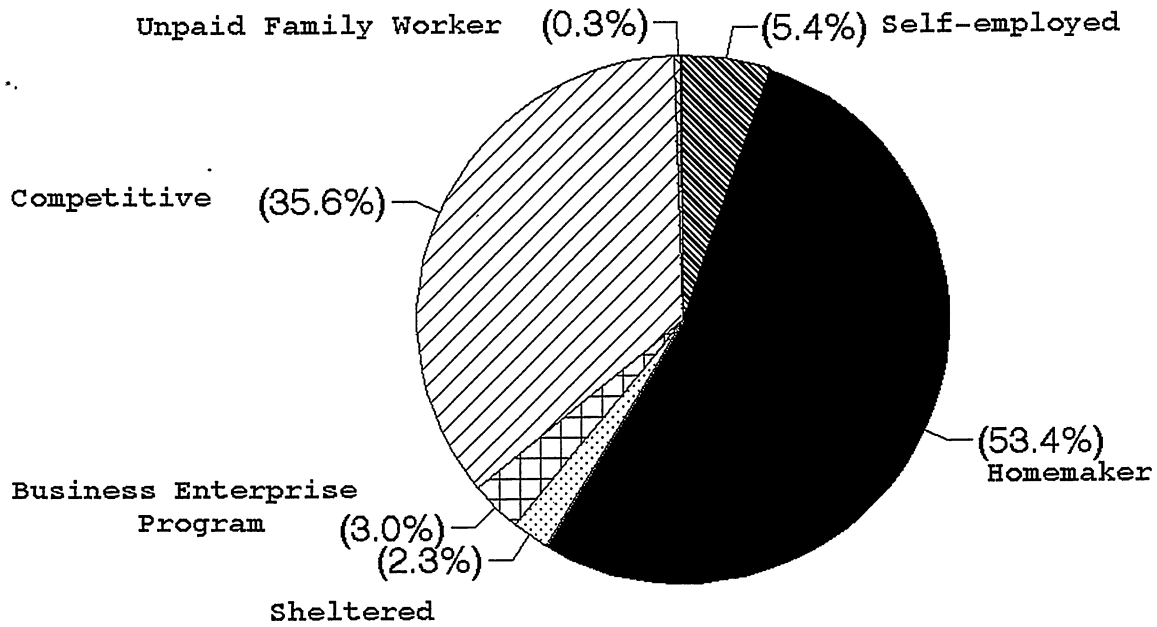
EMPLOYMENT CLOSURES BY TYPE

(BY FISCAL YEAR)

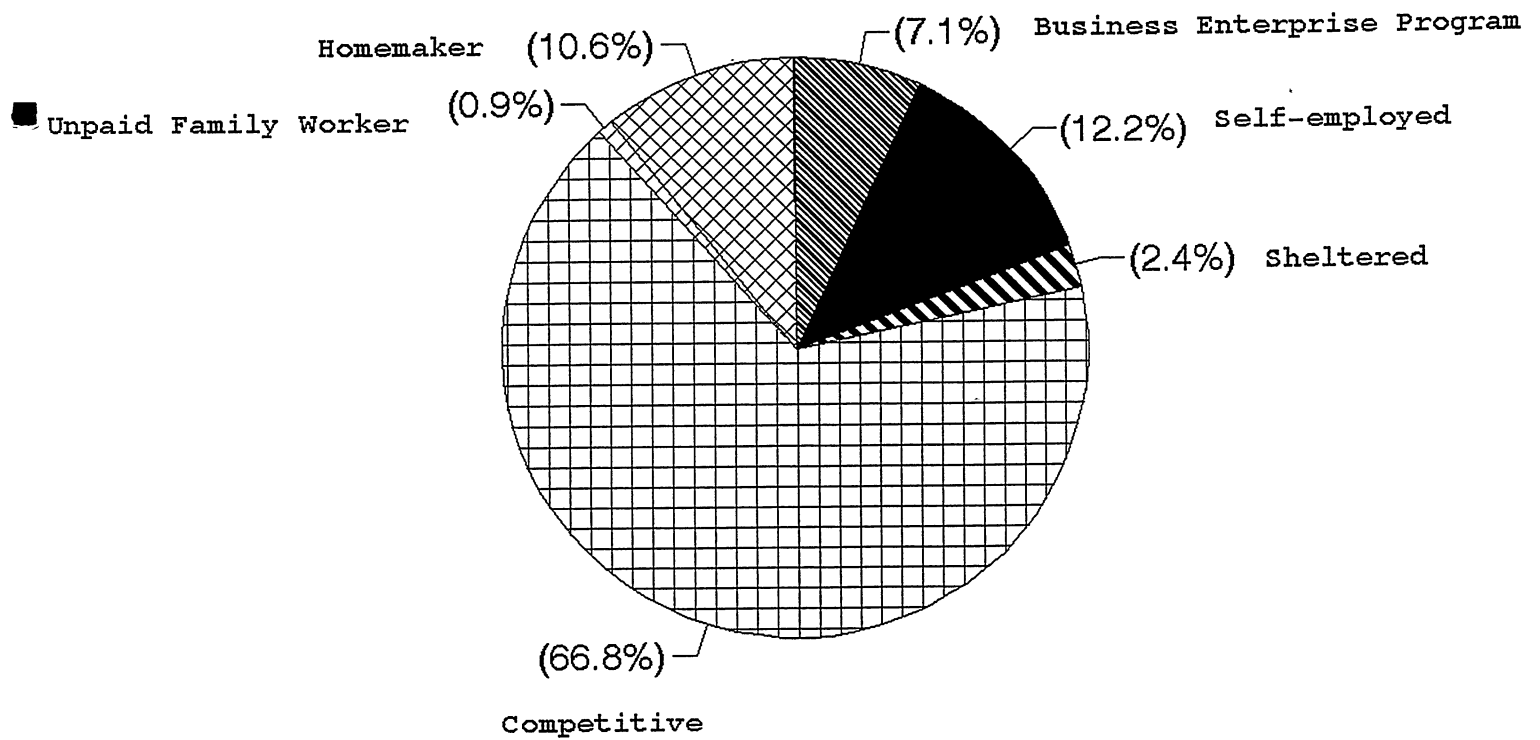


Type of Closure

(as percentage of total 26 closures)



Expenditure by Type of Closure



**SECTION II. PERFORMANCE OF REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR
THE BLIND DURING FISCAL YEAR 1996:**

TABLE I. OVERALL STATISTICS BY FISCAL YEAR

	FY96 / FY95 / FY94
Total VR Caseload:	1690 / 1708 / 1548
Referrals:	965 / 959 / 934
Eligible:	621 / 528 / 495
Close before eligibility established:	438 / 401 / 358
Closed as successful:	298 / 222 / 241
Closed unsuccessful after services:	138 / 88 / 70
Closed unsuccessful before IWRP services:	83 / 78 / 61

TABLE II. TYPES OF CLOSURE BY EXPENDITURE AND WAGES

TYPE/NUMBER OF CLOSURES

AVG. COST /	AVG. /	TOTAL COST OF /	TOTAL ANNUAL
OF SERVICES /	ANNUAL INCOME /	SERVICES /	INCOME

BEP: 9 CLOSURES

\$17,700	\$18,188	\$159,301	\$163,696
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SELF-EMPLOYED: 16 CLOSURES

\$17,291	\$16,721	\$276,664	\$267,540
----------	----------	-----------	-----------

SHELTERED: 7 CLOSURES

\$7,576	\$5,474	\$53,035	\$38,324
---------	---------	----------	----------

COMPETITIVE: 106 CLOSURES

\$14,169	\$16,704	\$1,510,927	\$1,770,704
----------	----------	-------------	-------------

HOMEMAKER: 159 CLOSURES

\$1,513	*****	\$240,613	*****
---------	-------	-----------	-------

UNPD. FAM. WORKER: 1 CLOSURE

\$19,863	*****	\$19,863	*****
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COST OF EMPLOYMENT CLOSURES (BEP, SELF-EMPLOYED, SHELTERED, COMPETITIVE)

\$1,999,927

ANNUAL INCOME OF EMPLOYMENT CLOSURES

\$2,240,264

STATUS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES DURING FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 1996:

RSB's caseload remained stable during FY 1996, with 1690 cases versus 1708 for FY 1995 and 1548 for FY 1994. Referrals remained constant, with a moderate increase in the rate of those determined eligible. Overall successful closures were up significantly, with 298 closed as successfully rehabilitated. This compares with FY 1995, when 222 cases were closed successfully, and FY 1994 with 241. Of particular interest are the numbers of those employed competitively, self-employed, in extended employment, or with the Business Enterprise Program. In FY 1996, RSB was involved in the successful rehabilitation of 138 consumers in these types of employment. This accomplishment shows an increase of 48.4% compared to FY 1995 and 66.2% compared to FY 1994. In the area of competitive employment, RSB recorded 106 closures, as compared to 76 in FY 1995 and 57 in FY 1994, resulting in increases of 39.4% and 85.9% respectively. These increases come in the area most emphasized by the 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, that of competitive employment. Additionally, 159 consumers completed their rehabilitation as homemakers and one as an unpaid family worker. Some of the types of employment achieved by RSB consumers include:

Auto Care Specialist*Caseworker*Music Therapy Teacher* Computer Skills Instructor*Personnel Director*Accounting Technician*Advertising Representative*Telemarketer*Customer Service Representative*Medication Technician*Library Assistant*Health/Fitness Instructor*Real Estate Agent

NOTE: For a complete listing of employment types with demographic data, please turn to Appendix A.

COST/INCOME COMPARISON FOR SUCCESSFUL CLOSURES:

RSB expended \$1,999,927 in rehabilitation funds on behalf of the 138 consumers who succeeded in competitive, extended, self-, and BEP employment during FY 1996. This relates to an average expenditure per case of \$14,492. In contrast, this group's income, (extrapolated from weekly salary at time of closure), would be \$2,240,264, an amount which

actually exceeds the cost of their rehabilitation in the first year following rehabilitation. If a 20% tax rate existed (state and federal combined), the taxes paid by these consumers would repay the cost of their rehabilitation within five years, irrespective of the reduction in Social Security and other disability payments. A total of \$260,476 was expended on behalf of the 160 consumers closed as homemakers or unpaid family workers, an average of \$1,627 per case. In all, \$2,260,403 was spent on 298 cases, for an average expenditure of \$7,585. Overall, 88.47% of the VR funds were expended in cases involving competitive, self-, extended and BEP employment. Only 11.53% of the funds were related to homemaker or unpaid family worker closures.

SECTION III: ACTIVITIES OF RSB DURING FISCAL YEAR 1996

CONTRACTING FOR REHABILITATION TEACHING SERVICES:

The subject of contracting for rehabilitation teaching services was discussed at the November, 1995 meeting of the SRAC. During the period of this report, a request for proposals for itinerant rehabilitation teaching services was developed and a contract awarded to the St. Louis Society for the Blind. In addition, RSB and Rehabilitation Institute (RI) are in the process of developing a contract amendment to RI's Personal and Vocational Adjustment (PVA) contract to authorize additional itinerant services. This action has been slowed due to legal review of the proposed contract.

The Southwest District Office in Springfield, Missouri, has approached a local company, Services for the Visually Impaired (SVI), which provides services to pre-school age (birth-five) children with visual disabilities regarding the possibility of contracting for pre-school services. RSB plans to coordinate the contracted services of SVI with the efforts of RSB's new Children's Teacher in the Southwest district office.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MENTOR PROGRAM:

As discussed in the FY 1995 SRAC Annual Report, RSB approached the Missouri Council of the Blind (MCB) and the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri (NFB) with the idea of sponsoring a voluntary network of mentors. Mentors would be assigned to RSB consumers who have either recently lost their vision or begun their rehabilitation program. The mentors would visit consumers and provide them with information relative to their adjustment to blindness, act as a role model, or simply make themselves available to answer questions and provide moral support to the consumer. RSB conducted several meetings with all of the involved parties in order to create an agreement between all concerned as to the operation of the mentor program. Both the MCB and NFB have been instrumental in recruiting persons who wish to be mentors, designing the program and a training structure for the initial mentors, and helping to classify volunteers so that consumers could be matched with someone of like age, experience, and interests. 55 persons have volunteered to act as mentors, with training scheduled to take place during October, 1996. RSB has also received 128 requests from consumers who would like to have a mentor assigned to them. Eight SRAC members have volunteered to serve as mentors, and several were involved in the development of the program.

FINISHING TOUCHES SEMINAR:

During review of the RSB Strategic Plan at the May, 1996 SRAC meeting, a suggestion was made that RSB should sponsor a seminar for consumers who are approaching the end of their rehabilitation program. The purpose of this seminar would be to present consumers with needed information to prepare them for taking part in a job search and subsequent employment. Referring to a vocational seminar which had been held previously, this seminar would be called "Finishing Touches." Possible items to be covered in such a seminar included: rights as a blind employee, resumes and cover letters, personal presentations including dress and grooming, self advocacy, meeting equipment needs, interviewing tips, the job search, salary negotiations, self employment, and writing business plans.

The RSB Deputy Director tasked the Employment Outcome Unit with development of a plan for conducting the seminar.

At the August, 1996 SRAC meeting, Victoria Brust, Director of the Center for Blindness and Visual Impairment in Kansas City, outlined a similar program conducted by her center. This program was conducted in Wichita, Kansas during the past year and was hailed as a success. SRAC members requested that verification of the employment outcomes that resulted from the seminar be researched and presented prior to a decision to conduct a like event in Missouri. This verification was not obtained during the period of this report.

RSB CHILDREN'S SERVICES:

RSB provides services to children from birth to age 14 through four Pre-School Rehabilitation Teachers (PSRTs) located in Kansas City, Springfield, Jefferson City and Sikeston. These services are intended to educate parents about their child's disability, the services that are available relevant to their child's needs, and how the parents can aid in their child's development. With school-age children, the PSRTs assist the child and family in developing skills in activities of daily living which fall outside the parameters of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the local school district's mandate to provide a free appropriate public education.

In October, 1995, teachers of the visually impaired from a St. Charles based cooperative education district contacted RSB's Deputy Director to report that the children in their district were not receiving adequate services. Discussion with the teachers was facilitated by SRAC member Burt Maurer. Following this discussion, a decision was made to transfer the St. Charles cases to a new adult RT in the St. Louis area. Prior to implementation of this decision, budget shortfalls prevented immediate hiring of an adult RT.

At the November, 1995 SRAC meeting in St. Louis, a plan was discussed that would allow RSB to contract for an itinerant RT to provide services to the children in the St. Charles area beginning in February, 1996.

When this did not occur according to schedule, each parent of a child with an open case was contacted by letter or phone to explain the reason for the delay in services for their children and asking them to contact the PSRT from Jefferson City if they required services for their children, pending hiring of an RT in the St. Louis area. In August, 1996, when the PSRT position in Jefferson City became vacant, the position was moved to RSB's office in St. Ann in order to be closer to the largest concentration of children who need services.

In May, 1996, the SRAC's Children's Education Committee met with RSB staff and teachers of the visually impaired from across the state. There were substantive discussions of the responsibilities of each of the agencies involved in education of children who are blind or visually impaired, leading to a better understanding of the roles played by the schools and RSB in providing children's services.

EFFORTS TO PUBLICIZE RSB PROGRAMS AND COLLECT CONSUMER INPUT:

During FY 1996, RSB held eleven public meetings throughout the state to gather input on the VR state plan. The agency took extraordinary measures by direct-mailing 3500 print and braille announcements regarding the meetings. They also publicized the meetings through public service announcements and press releases issued across the state, to Audio Reading Service in Kansas and Radio Information Service in Illinois, both major sources of information for blind and visually impaired consumers in the major metropolitan areas. A total of 100 persons attended the public meetings.

In order to more fully exploit the availability of consumer input, during FY 1997 RSB will hold public meetings in conjunction with the conventions of the two consumer advocacy groups in the state, the Missouri Council of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri. These represent the two largest public gatherings of RSB consumers in the state. RSB administrative staff have attended the consumer group conventions in the past, often presenting on changes in programs or policies; however, any input that was gathered was completely informal. Consumer group officials have been very receptive to this method of

seeking input and have welcomed RSB's attendance at their events.

Another source of input is the use of public forums held by the SRAC. The SRAC meeting is held at a different location every quarter and a public forum is held in conjunction with each of its meetings. The public forums meet the criteria for inclusion as public hearings as they adhere to the same rules for meeting announcement, subject matter, etc. as the agency's public hearings. During FY 1996, 82 consumers attended SRAC public forums throughout the state, providing input on matters including children's services, RSB's use of self and home-based employment, and the effectiveness of PVA facilities. The public forums are a powerful tool for communicating RSB's services to the community, both from the inclusion of local consumers in development of RSB's plans for the future and from the exposure given the agency as a result of television coverage of every public forum held. This results in information about RSB services reaching areas of the state that are inaccessible to other media.

In October, 1995, in order to more effectively reach target audiences in communities throughout the state, RSB released three new brochures. These were distributed to district offices and staff, as well as to other agencies who often come into contact with consumers who might have need of RSB services. These brochures differed from past practice by being directed to three different audiences. One brochure targets consumers who are interested in independent living services, one targets consumers who are interested in vocational rehabilitation, and the third brochure is directed to employers. This final brochure explains how RSB services can help make a compatible match between an employer and the talent pool of RSB consumers. The response from consumers, community agencies, and employers has led to reprinting of each of the brochures less than six months after their initial release. RSB has also produced radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs) which have been played throughout the state promoting the hiring of visually impaired consumers and the use of the BEP program.

RSB'S IMPLEMENTATION OF REHABILITATION ASSISTANTS:

In September, 1995 RSB conducted the initial training for a new class of employees, Rehabilitation Assistants (RAs). The RA classification was created as a resource to enhance the performance of RSB's field staff by removing the majority of the administrative burden from the counselors and rehabilitation teachers. In addition to performing administrative duties for the field staff, it was envisioned that RAs would have a greater role in consumer contact and problem resolution, allowing field staff more time away from the office and additional productive time when in the office.

The RAs consisted of nine existing clerk-typists from the agency who were upgraded to the RA position; nine additional staff were hired directly to become RAs. All of the RAs were experienced support staff, with the majority of new hires coming from other rehabilitation and social service agencies. Hiring was completed in February, 1996.

In July, 1996, a survey was initiated to measure the effectiveness of the RA position within the first year of implementation and to provide some quantifiable measurement of their effect on vocational rehabilitation. The survey was conducted in all seven district offices with RAs, field staff and supervisors. Each staff member was interviewed separately with approximately 80% of RSB's district office staff taking part in the effort. Some of the results included:

- *Field staff have approximately 15-20% more time for consumer contact or planning activities due to the decreased administrative load.

- *Consumer responsiveness is improved as the RAs familiarity with the caseload allows them to resolve many problems for the consumer without waiting for the counselor or rehabilitation teacher to return from the field or answer phone messages.

- *Administration of RSB's bill-paying process has been simplified as the persons responsible for processing the bills (the RAs) are available in the office on a daily basis.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH PVA SERVICES AT CONTRACTED CRPS:

RSB conducted a consumer satisfaction survey of those consumers who completed PVA training at contracted Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) during FY 1995. Of 118 consumers who completed a PVA program during the fiscal year, 76 were contacted and gave their input to the telephone survey.

The respondents answered questions about various aspects of their attendance at the CRPs. In the final question, when asked whether they were pleased with the quality of services they had received, they gave a response of 4.55 (on a scale of 1=dissatisfied through 7=extremely satisfied). As a measure of their overall satisfaction with their experience at the CRP they were asked if they would recommend this CRP to others. The response was 4.58.

The responses received from the survey were provided to the CRPs for their use in correcting any deficiencies noted in the comments.

RSB BUDGET:

During the November, 1995 SRAC meeting, Deputy Director Sally Howard explained that a budget crisis had occurred in RSB, necessitating savings in personnel expenditures. Since FY 1992, RSB's expenditures for readers and drivers have increased significantly, due to both an increased number of staff for whom this accommodation must be provided and the increased salary paid to readers and drivers. These increases occurred during a period in which RSB had to absorb a reduction of two core FTEs as well as the repositioning of District Supervisors and Clerk-Typist IIIs to higher pay ranges.

RSB provides part-time readers and drivers to staff members who are blind or visually impaired as an accommodation. This allows persons who are blind or visually impaired to work competitively with their sighted peers in providing services to RSB consumers. RSB's current staff includes

27 employees who require the services of a reader, driver, or both in order to perform their duties.

RSB has requested an increase in FTEs for readers and drivers for the state fiscal year beginning in July, 1997, and has undertaken a review of their use with a view toward improving the effectiveness of this resource's use. In order to lessen the impact of the shortfall on vocational rehabilitation services, the Deputy Director committed to the SRAC that the agency would prioritize filling of any vacancies that occurred. In the event that funding was not available to fill all positions, field staff hiring would take priority over filling administrative positions (district supervisors and administrative staff). RSB remains committed to "leading by example" by hiring qualified persons with disabilities whenever possible.

SHORTAGE OF PERSONNEL AT RSB:

During the period of this report, RSB has experienced significant shortages in personnel in two classifications: Rehabilitation Teacher (RT) and Pre-School Rehabilitation Teacher (PSRT).

RSB has historically had difficulty in locating RT applicants with the necessary education, teaching skills, and particularly, Grade 2 Braille skills. Many applicants are available who meet the other criteria, but cannot meet the requirement of proficiency in Grade 2 Braille.

The vacancies in the PSRT positions have been difficult to fill due to the lack of applicants willing to accept a position which requires extensive travel, overnight trips, and in which they would be expected to work non-standard hours. These hours result from the requirement to meet with the children and families served outside of normal business and school hours. There also exists a shortage of otherwise qualified applicants with knowledge of blindness and the alternative skills of blindness which would be used in performing the duties of the position.

RSB STAFF QUALIFICATIONS:

RSB has hired three new field staff members during the period of this report. Two of the three have Master's Degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling, the other is a Rehabilitation Teacher with a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education.

Graduate-level academic courses were taken in rehabilitation subjects by three RSB staff during the fiscal year. RSB supported two Orientation and Mobility (O&M) specialists' attendance at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock for the second summer of training in the graduate O&M program. One counselor attended the ten week "Vision Specialist in Vocational Rehabilitation" program at Mississippi State University. There have been no requests for academic support for graduate courses in rehabilitation subjects at in-state institutions.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES UNIT:

During FY 1996, RSB created the Employment Outcomes Unit, a section consisting of a unit supervisor and two employment development specialists. This unit is involved in direct placement activities for current RSB consumers, in-service training on placement activities for RSB staff, and continued interaction with employment and training agencies and organizations. Additionally, the unit is to help establish access to needed information on vocational assessment, labor market information, job leads and job development/placement strategies.

Some of the activities the unit has been involved in include:

Student Network: A weekend seminar for post-secondary students and prospective students created to provide them with insights and information regarding the challenges they will face in post-secondary education and transition to the world of work.

Input into the One-Stop Centers: The unit has been involved in several meetings with the Division of Employment Security, JTPA, and agency computer staff to form a partnership which would allow RSB staff to electronically access data needed for their consumers

during the assessment, training and job search phases of the rehabilitation process.

Creation of a resource guide for job development/placement: Unit personnel have developed a resource guide for use by RSB staff in working with consumers and employers during the rehabilitation process. This guide contains materials aimed at improving RSB staff's knowledge of resources available to assist consumers in preparing for and achieving employment.

SECTION IV: ACTIVITIES OF THE STATE REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND DURING FISCAL YEAR 1996:

LEGISLATION AFFECTING THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WHO ARE BLIND:

Draft language for Senate Bill 582 was provided to the SRAC at the November, 1995 meeting by SRAC member Patrick Burch. This legislation was proposed last year but was not successful in becoming law. Mr. Burch explained that the legislation was proposed in order to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities by expanding both the list of places of public accommodation which must admit service animals, as well as the definition of service animals. Only some service animals were identified under current law, creating ambiguity as to the use of hearing and other service dogs. Additionally, the law would forbid discrimination in employment due to the use of any assistive technology aid or appliance. Discrimination in employment against users of assistive technology was not addressed under existing law. The SRAC approved a motion for the Chairman to attend the hearings on this issue in the House and testify in its favor. SB 582 was signed into law by Governor Carnahan on May 8, 1996. A copy of the text of that law is included at Appendix B.

ACTIVITIES OF THE DISINCENTIVES TO WORK COMMITTEE:

The Disincentives to Work Committee was created by a vote of the SRAC at the November, 1995 meeting. This committee was charged with drafting a document prior to the February, 1996 meeting of the SRAC to

consider some of the disincentives to work that exist for Missouri consumers with visual impairments, as well as suggesting methods to remove some of the disincentives which act as barriers to employment. The committee met by conference call and developed an outline of issues they would like to discuss. Some of the general areas discussed were:

1. **Transportation:** There is very little public transportation in Missouri other than within the metropolitan areas.
2. **Added cost of work:** Expenses of going to work, when coupled with low wages may prove too burdensome to entice consumers to consider employment.
3. **Education, training and skills:** Many of RSB's consumers do not have sufficient education, training or skill without extensive personal and vocational adjustment to blindness.
4. **Personal:** Many consumers are reluctant to work due to fears of the unknown, the need to relocate, or due to uncertain health.

This represents only a partial list of the identifiable concerns with disincentives to work. The committee is scheduled to continue meetings and deliver a final report at the SRAC meeting in November, 1996.

TIMELINESS OF SRAC APPOINTMENTS:

Since the initial series of appointments for the SRAC in 1993, all 21 positions on the SRAC have been open for appointment, either due to expiring terms, resignations, or positions where an appointment was never made. In response to the nominations forwarded by RSB, six SRAC members have been reappointed to new terms and one appointment was received for a member who had not previously served on the Council. With this exception, no new appointments have taken place.

This has been particularly troublesome in the positions of Client Assistance Program (CAP), Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) representatives. Nominations have been made for these positions; however, none of them have been acted upon. The nominees for the CRP, CAP, and VRC vacancies have been invited to attend SRAC meetings (without vote) so they may provide a resource to the SRAC on matters in their area of expertise. There are currently 15 serving members on the SRAC, (not including the three persons who are taking part without appointment).

At the May, 1996 meeting of the SRAC, the Chairman announced that he had received a letter from the Governor specifying that all SRAC members would continue to serve until they were replaced.

Also at the May, 1996 meeting, the SRAC asked the Chairman to write to the Governor, requesting that priority be given to appointment to the SRAC of persons from traditionally under-represented or underserved groups, including minorities, in order to enhance the diversity of the membership. The Governor responded with a letter that promised he would take this issue into consideration when deliberating on prospective appointees.

It is imperative that a more timely manner of making these appointments be undertaken, with priority given to filling those vacancies specifically required by the Rehabilitation Act so that the SRAC will meet the requirements for legal constitution and be effective in its operation.

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION TO RSB:

Discussion of the need for new members of the SRAC led to that of preparing new members for their duties. In the original group of members, the vast majority had extensive experience with the agency, either from working for the agency, their own course of rehabilitation, or from advocating with the agency on behalf of consumers. Current nominations include a considerable number of prospective members from the business community, with the resulting lack of knowledge in blindness and rehabilitation. Resolving this issue requires that training be offered to orient new members to rehabilitation and blindness, as well as to the

operation of the agency as quickly as possible.

In order to offer this opportunity to new members in as effective and efficient a manner as possible, the Council was asked at the August, 1996 meeting if they would like to take part in RSB's quarterly New Staff Training. They would attend the briefings conducted by RSB administrative staff and invited presenters on programs, the history and philosophy of rehabilitation, the rehabilitation process and diseases/anatomy of the eye. Additionally, all new members would be offered the opportunity to visit a district office in their area. During this visit, the SRAC members will be able to ride with and observe RSB field staff in the performance of their duties.

The SRAC discussed the possibility of taking advantage of the offer. Concern was expressed about the length of the training interfering with a SRAC member's employment. In order to prevent undue hardship on new members, the SRAC voted to support the attendance of new members at this training on a voluntary basis. Following this approval, several members who are currently serving asked if current members could attend the training. RSB extended the invitation to participate in this training to all current members as well as new members.

It is felt that this effort will provide Council members with a better understanding of the operations of RSB, the philosophy which guides them, the requisite knowledge of blindness and visual disability, as well as the obstacles faced by field staff in everyday service delivery.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY:

In accordance with the responsibilities of the SRAC outlined in the Rehabilitation Act, a survey of consumer satisfaction was conducted beginning in December, 1995. This survey was sent to all consumers whose cases were closed following successful rehabilitation along with those that were closed as unsuccessful following provision of services. In all, 310 surveys were mailed. Each of the surveys was coded by use of a braille number, allowing staff to track those surveys which had not been returned. One month after the initial mailing, a reminder letter was sent to those who

had not returned the survey. This letter offered to take the information telephonically if the consumer wished, using the RSB toll free number to prevent expense to the consumer. Two weeks after this letter was sent, telephone calls were made to each consumer who had not returned the survey or called to complete it telephonically. Following several attempts, staff were unable to contact 142 consumers, for a completion rate of 54%. 85 of the surveys were completed and returned by mail; 83 were completed by phone contact. 106 consumers answered the entire survey (either by mail or phone), while 62 refused to complete the entire survey but consented to answering Question 25 as a generic input.

The responses for each question were tabulated and analyzed to produce a median response, the point at which 50% of responses are above and 50% below the point on the Likert scale. The average of the median scores for the 25 questions was 4.06 out of a possible 5.0 (with 5.0 being highly satisfied and 1.0 extremely dissatisfied). The only area of concern identified during the survey was the response regarding the quality of RSB's employment related services. Three of the four questions regarding employment services rated significantly below the average response for the remainder of the survey.

During September, 1996, SRAC staff met with personnel from the Department of Social Services regarding analysis of the consumer satisfaction survey. Individual responses from the survey will be supplied to DSS for evaluation and analysis. This operation will allow the results to be analyzed with regard to demographic data, including: geographic location, race, gender, etc. This operation has not been possible with equipment available to the SRAC or RSB.

During the first quarter of FY 1997, the consumer survey will be revised and sent to consumers whose cases were closed during FY 1996. Once this year-group of consumers has been surveyed, the survey will be conducted on a monthly basis in order to prevent loss of contact with consumers who have moved upon completion of their rehabilitation program. In the past, more than 30% of the surveys mailed were returned as undeliverable as the consumer had moved during the period between closure and the survey.

STANDING COMMITTEE STRUCTURE FOR THE SRAC:

It became apparent that the current SRAC structure did not provide for continuity of action between meetings, nor did it allow for review and definition of issues prior to the quarterly meetings. In the past, a new sub-committee had been created for each issue. This led to discussion of many matters at length before the full SRAC which could have been more expeditiously dealt with in committee. Although the sub-committee structure utilized by the SRAC in the past had been moderately successful in continuing work between SRAC meetings, it lacked an ongoing contact with issues which could lead to improved understanding of repetitive issues such as the State and Strategic Plans. Additionally, this structure restricted the flow of information between meetings of the SRAC (at which sub-committees are usually formed).

The recommendation for a standing committee structure came from the concern that the SRAC be as effective as possible using the limited time available to research, analyze, debate and resolve issues. Under this structure, the committee would do a majority of the research and analysis, debate the issue, then define those issues it considered to be of such concern and importance that they merit the attention of the full SRAC. The committee's report to the SRAC would include those issues, along with any recommendations for action regarding a particular issue. In the event that a matter of concern arose in the committee's area of concentration between meetings, the appropriate committee would be informed and action could be taken in a relatively short time frame.

In August, 1996, the SRAC approved an amendment to the Bylaws which created standing committees. The three committees are:

(A) **Planning Committee:** Responsible for reviewing, analyzing and recommending to the SRAC on RSB State and Strategic Plans, as well as any planning process undertaken by the SRAC either separately, or in conjunction with, RSB or other State agencies.

(B) **Evaluation Committee:** Responsible for reviewing, analyzing and recommending to the SRAC those matters pertaining to:

(1) Efforts to determine the extent, scope and effectiveness of

services

- (2) Consumer satisfaction with services
- (3) Ongoing statewide studies of rehabilitation needs
- (4) Satisfaction with/effectiveness of functions that other agencies provide for RSB consumers
- (5) The SRAC Annual Report

(C) Program/Policy Committee: Responsible for reviewing, analyzing and recommending to the SRAC those matters pertaining to:

- (1) RSB staffing needs
- (2) Eligibility for RSB services
- (3) Applications for service
- (4) Changes to RSB policy, rule, or process

The structure of the standing committees relates directly to the documents which form the provenance of the SRAC. Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as Amended in 1992, Executive Order 93-01, as well as the SRAC Bylaws have been consulted to identify those areas of concentration which would lend themselves to a standing committee structure. In devising the structure expressed above, those responsibilities of the SRAC which demand a great deal of time, research and discussion have been grouped together to form task listings which are clear and unambiguous, and which complement each other, such as the state and strategic plans.

In researching this concept, it was found that the vast majority of consumer councils around the country use standing committees as a method to ensure the best use of their council's meeting time, while allowing the council to be responsive to matters which arise between meetings or which require continued effort between meetings. In Missouri, both the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Advisory Council use standing committees. According to members and staffers, these committees play an important role in the effectiveness and efficiency of their councils, allowing much better communication between the agency and the councils on matters that arise between meetings.

INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION OF FACILITY ISSUES:

The subject of alleged restriction of client choice and ADA violations at Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) was presented at the May, 1996, SRAC meeting in Joplin. The main concern expressed was that restrictions had been placed on the use of dog guides at the Colorado Center for the Blind (CCB) and the Iowa Center for the Blind. Since there have never been any written policies on the use of dog guides at any of the Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), and since these practices are now being questioned, Homer Page, Director of CCB, was present to explain his program's policy on this issue. He also provided a written statement regarding this issue which had been requested by RSB. After much discussion, the SRAC voted to request the Governor's office to investigate past practices of all CRPs that RSB contracts with to see whether they have been in compliance with ADA and the Rehabilitation Act. The SRAC then defined the areas they believed should be investigated. Those areas included:

1. Are clients given choice of method of orientation and mobility, including the type of cane to be used?
2. Are there restrictions on the use of dog guides, and are dog guides discouraged?
3. Are materials available in different formats according to client choice?
4. What levels of Braille training are available?
5. Is the center in compliance with ADA?
6. Is the center in compliance with state policy?
7. Is independence maximally encouraged?
8. Does the program's policy instill work incentives?

Following the meeting, efforts were made by RSB to obtain an independent investigation as requested by the SRAC. An attorney from the St. Louis area was retained to conduct the investigation. As of the writing of this report, the target date for completion of the investigation is December 1, 1996.

PUBLIC FORUMS HELD BY THE SRAC:

The SRAC held public forums at all four meetings during the period of this report. These took place in St. Louis, Jefferson City, Joplin and Cape Girardeau.

Each of the forums were addressed to the consumers present as an opportunity to provide input to RSB, with no restrictions placed on what subject matter could be discussed. Some of the topics that were discussed during the public forums were:

- * RSB services for children
- * Services for Deaf/Blind consumers
- * BEP's standard of food service certification
- * Availability of Telephone Devices for the Deaf
- * Field staff accessibility to consumers
- * State ID cards
- * Dog Guide legislation
- * Use of dog guides at CPVA programs
- * Randolph-Sheppard vending program
- * RSB's support of self-employment

The input from these forums will be used to augment agency public hearings in development of the state plan. In total, the SRAC's four public hearings resulted in input from 82 consumers, nearly as many as attended RSB's public hearings on the State Plan.

TELECONFERENCE ON TRANSITION:

Seven SRAC members, along with 17 RSB staff and many parents of children who are blind or visually impaired, attended the Teleconference on Transition, a statewide teleconference jointly sponsored by RSB, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Center for Innovation in Special Education. The conference, held on February 28, 1996, was conducted at 20 sites throughout the state. Subjects discussed during the conference included:

- *Linking business and industry with local school districts**

- *Speakers in the field of transition**

- *Spotlighting exemplary programs**

- *Local transition issues**

In addition, a panel of presenters from the agencies named above took part in a group discussion of transition that was transmitted via satellite to the conference sites, with an interactive audio hookup for questions.

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION COMMITTEE:

The Children's Education Committee (CEC) was formed at the November, 1995, SRAC meeting. The CEC was charged with researching the subject of RSB services to children and providing recommendations on their findings to the full council. During the following months, the CEC conducted several teleconferences, met with RSB staff to more fully understand the current scope of activities of RSB's services to children, and conducted a meeting involving RSB staff, teachers of the visually impaired from several locations around the state and the CEC's members.²⁸ Following these efforts, the CEC met by teleconference to develop recommendations for submission to the full Council, as follows:

RSB should at the earliest possible date change the title of Pre-School Rehabilitation Teachers to "Children's Service Coordinator", to more accurately reflect their mission and role.

That RSB should continue with the current level of staffing and resources for the Children's Services Program, however with an expressed primary role of advocacy. Direct services should be provided only as needed, appropriate, and at the discretion of the District Supervisor and Children's Service Coordinator in the affected district.

That RSB should make efforts to publicize the need for early identification of students with visual disabilities. Such efforts could take the form of public service ads, radio/television, newspaper, education journals, and advertisement in journals that family doctors, optometrists and ophthalmologists read.

That RSB should make their staff and materials available (on request) to provide in-service training and consultation to schools, health departments, pre-schools, Missouri Parents Act (MPACT), MSB Outreach Program (MOSPIN) (for parent advisor training), etc.

That RSB should research the possibility of allowing flexible hours (without core time) for Children's Service Coordinators to accommodate the scheduling of parents and children outside of school hours.

In addition, the Children's Education Committee recommended that the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Blind write the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, asking for their acknowledgement of and current status of the following items:

Efforts to comply with the spirit as well as the letter of Missouri's braille literacy law.

Efforts to educate the LEAs on their responsibilities to provide services that meet IDEA and OSEP guidance.

Activities directed at creating an effective cooperative agreement between RSB, DESE, and MSB that will be binding on the Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

Making coursework in basic skills required of Teachers of the Visually Impaired (VI) more readily available to meet the immediate needs of teachers located in districts without VI certified personnel. Basic skills blocks in braille, orientation and mobility, and Activities of Daily Living should be offered in an in-service setting and be available to meet minimum requirements during the time that is needed to either hire a VI teacher or qualify one for certification.

Publicizing and supporting the LEA's use of Braille "teacher aides/assistants" or "mentors" who are skilled in the daily use of braille and other alternative techniques of blindness, as authorized by the DESE State Plan.

The full SRAC considered the recommendations of the CEC at the August, 1996 meeting and voted to adopt them. They were then given to RSB as the recommendations of the SRAC regarding children's services for children from birth through age 14.

In response to the recommendations of the SRAC, RSB has submitted a proposal for a new job description for PSRTs to the Division of Personnel. Action on this proposal is expected during the 1st Quarter of FY 1997. Additionally, flex-time is authorized for use by the PSRTs on a day-to-day basis as necessary and approved by the district supervisor. The use of flex-time is authorized under existing Merit System rules and requires no action on the part of the agency.

SECTION V: SUMMARY

During the period of this report, the SRAC and RSB have developed and improved upon their relationship to more effectively meet the needs of Missourians who are blind or visually impaired. Some of the results of these combined efforts are evidenced by RSB's employment data for the year, the implementation of a joint RSB-MCB-NFB mentoring program,

and the enhancement of field staff's effectiveness through the use of Rehabilitation Assistants. While the SRAC is very appreciative of the gains represented here, additional steps must be taken if the momentum of this year is to be continued and improved upon within the coming months. At its November, 1996 meeting, the SRAC developed a list of priorities for their operation during the next fiscal year. Those priorities are:

1. To look into the effectiveness of PVA facilities. The SRAC believes that insufficient data exists as to the effectiveness of PVA facilities contracted with by RSB. Several surveys and studies have been undertaken in the past to determine consumer satisfaction with the facilities; however, no instrument has been developed to track how effective these programs are at actually preparing consumers for achieving independence and vocational success.
2. To revise the consumer satisfaction survey so that it may reveal more pertinent data regarding areas that were rated lower than average on the survey of FY 1995 closures, including RSB's employment-related services.
3. To help create a more cooperative relationship between DESE and RSB. Chief among the many issues are the early identification of children who are blind and a common referral system that would ensure that such children are afforded every possible opportunity for services from all agencies concerned.
4. To provide input for inclusion in the effort to reauthorize the Rehabilitation Act.
5. To seek a more effective means of gathering public input for inclusion in the RSB State and Strategic Planning process.

Also, during the coming year, the SRAC intends to review the results of the independent investigation of PVA facilities. This investigation, begun at the request of the SRAC, should resolve any issues relating to contracted facilities' compliance with the ADA and consumer choice as espoused in the Rehabilitation Act.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF JOB TITLES/WAGES FOR 26 CLOSURES

Job Title	Weekly Wage
Braille Instructor	\$350
Vocational Specialist	\$310
Rehabilitation Manager	\$650
Auto Care Center Manager	\$163
Caseworker	\$334
Caseworker	\$423
Computer Instructor	\$400
Vending Stand Operator	\$300
Sheltered Workshop Worker	\$50
Customer Service Rep.	\$275
Assembler	\$175
Independent Living Specialist	\$315
Construction Engineer	\$662
Production Worker	\$40
Music Therapy Teacher	\$280
Personnel Director	\$500
News Route Delivery	\$175
Accounting Technician	\$570
Packager	\$100
Health Aide	\$100
Librarian	\$60
Advertising Sales Representative	\$80
Music Teacher	\$235
Caseworker	\$414
Customer Service Helper	\$117
Computer Operator	\$150
Teacher's Aide	\$101
Computer Programmer	\$625
Clerical Worker	\$175
Catering Truck Operator	\$75
Order Taker	\$118
Telemarketer	\$260
Assembler	\$140
Woodworker	\$100
Customer Service Representative	\$380
Computer Operator	\$844
Payroll Clerk	\$225
Bank Reconciliation Clerk	\$230
Customer Service Clerk	\$125
Caseworker	\$408
Collections Clerk	\$700
Medication Technician	\$200
Library Assistant	\$94
Housekeeper	\$79
Tape Duplicator	\$243
Book Binder	\$175

Job Title	Weekly Wage
Health/Fitness Instructor	\$163
Customer Service Representative	\$161
Receptionist	\$240
Real Estate Agent	\$250
Cook	\$300
Vending Operation Manager	\$400
Vending Operation Manager	\$530
Professor	\$500
Screen Roller	\$240
Stock Clerk	\$150
Clerk	\$300
Cashier	\$254
Staff Nurse	\$577
Production Supervisor	\$800
Nursing Supervisor	\$472
Taxpayer Service Representative	\$390
Clerk	\$63
Smokehouse Attendant	\$370
Hotel Consultant	\$350
Vocational Specialist	\$564
Warehouse Worker	\$480
Carpet Cleaner	\$211
Sheltered Workshop	\$109
Dining Room Attendant	\$105
Chip Bin Tender	\$175
Tax Preparer	\$500
Assembler	\$109
Language Interpreter	\$694
Secretary	\$366
Information Clerk	\$100
Laundry Laborer	\$135
Rehabilitation Specialist	\$438
Human Resource Specialist	\$480
Housekeeper	\$310
Caseworker	\$561
Tax Accountant	\$385
Computer System Analyst	\$999
Assembler	\$85
Computer Programmer	\$525
Clergy	\$346
Aeronautical Engineer	\$515
Reservation Clerk	\$213
Vending Operation Manager	\$250
Vending Operation Manager	\$400
Kitchen Worker	\$126
Collection Representative	\$379
Research Technician	\$402
Floral Designer	\$415

Job Title	Weekly Wage
Bicycle Assembler	\$328
Farmer	****
Nurse's Aide	\$174
Computer Programmer	\$623
Special Education Teacher	\$423
Nurse's Aide	\$190
Tire Repairer	\$260
Collection Supervisor	\$113
Telemarketer	\$220
Laundry Worker	\$280
Food Service Manager	****
Salvage Laborer	\$60
Laundry Worker	\$143
Automobile Mechanic	\$486
Laborer	\$240
Day Care Worker	\$240
Clergy	\$235
Television Producer	\$280
Packing Technician	\$234
Sheltered Workshop	\$189
Counselor	\$501
Self-employed	\$198
Vending Operation Manager	\$231
Office Manager	\$173
Self-Employed, Farm Supplies	\$365
Teacher For Blind	\$510
Clinical Director	\$657
Sales and Development Director	\$280
Assembler	\$25
Silverware Wrapper	\$39
Math Teacher	\$788
Braille Teacher	\$510
Rehabilitation Specialist	\$454
Vending Operation Manager	\$200
Vending Operation Manager	\$437
Clerk	\$334
Vending Operation Manager	\$400
Maintenance Worker	\$420
Tax Preparer	\$138
Auto Parts Supervisor	\$395
Usher	\$84
Computer Systems Engineer	\$999
Metal Finishing Foreman	\$523
Medical Transcriptionist	\$288

APPENDIX B: TEXT OF SENATE BILL 582

209.150. Rights of persons with visual, hearing or physical disabilities -- guide, hearing or service dogs, no extra charge for -- liability for actual damages. --

1. Every person with a visual, aural, or physical disability shall have the same rights afforded to a person with no such disability to the full and free use of the streets, highways, sidewalks, walkways, public buildings, public facilities, and other public places.

2. Every person with a visual, aural, or physical disability is entitled to full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of all common carriers, airplanes, motor vehicles, railroad trains, motor buses, taxis, streetcars, boats or any other public conveyances or modes of transportation, hotels, lodging places, places of public accommodation, amusement or resort, and other places to which the general public is invited, subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to all persons.

3. Every person with a visual, aural, or physical disability shall have the right to be accompanied by a guide dog, hearing dog, or service dog, which is especially trained for the purpose, in any of the places listed in subsection 2 of this section without being required to pay an extra charge for the guide dog, hearing dog or service dog; provided that such person shall be liable for any damage done to the premises or facilities by such dog.

4. As used in sections 209.150 to 209.190, the term "service dog" means any dog specifically trained to assist a person with a physical disability by performing necessary physical tasks which the person cannot perform. Such tasks shall include, but not be limited to, pulling a wheelchair, retrieving items, and carrying supplies.

(L. 1941 p. 344 section 1, A.L. 1965 p. 95, A.L. 1977 S.B. 12, A.L. 1980 H.B. 1133, A.L. 1988 H.B. 1196, A.L. 1996 S.B. 582)

209.162. Discrimination or interference with persons having visual, hearing or physical disability, an unlawful employment practice, complaints, filed by aggrieved person. -- It is unlawful employment practice for any employer to discriminate against any person with a visual, aural or physical disability by interfering, directly or indirectly, with the use of an aid or appliance, including a guide dog, hearing dog or service dog by such person. Any person aggrieved by a violation of this section may make a verified complaint to the Missouri commission on human rights pursuant to the provisions of section 213.075, RSMo.

(L. 1996 S.B. 582)

